Level of alkalinity in soil/fertile land

533. SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that due to continuous and increased use of chemical fertilizers, the level of alkalinity and salinity in the soil/fertile land has gone up high;

(b) if so, whether it is also a fact that the use of gypsum has been very useful in brining down salinity and alkalinity level; and

(c) if so, the immediate efforts being made by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTI LAL BHURIA): (a) There is no evidence to suggest about increased level of alkalinity and salinity in the soil due to continuous and increased use of chemical fertilizers. Investigations under All India Coordinated Research Project under Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) on 'Long Term Fertilizer Experiments' over the last few decades in different locations also didn't reveal such instances.

(b) and (c) Gypsum is being used for recalmation of alkaline soils. The Government is implementing a Centrally Sponsored Scheme for Reclamation of Alkali Soil (RAS) since 7th Five Year Plan for reclamation of soils, which are suffering from alkalinity. Presently this scheme is subsumed under Macro Management of Agriculture (MMA). Under the scheme, financial assistance limited to 25% is being given for providing soil amendment (Gypsum/ pyrite) @ 50% of Gypsum Required value or maximum of 5 tonnes per hectare for isolated approach and maximum of 15 tonnes per hectare for projectized approach.

Policy on contract farming

534. SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is actively considering to frame a policy on contract farming with a view to co-ordinate production and marketing activities;

(b) if so, the details thereof and when it is expected to be initiated; and

(c) how far this shall be helpful to the small farmers for better remuneration of their produce particularly in backward areas/districts of Uttar Pradesh?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTI LAL BHURIA): (a) and (b) The Model Agricultural Produce Marketing (Regulation) Act circulated by the Central Government to the States in 2003 for implementing marketing reforms has provisions for the registration of contract farming sponsors and recording of contract farming agreements with the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) or a prescribed authority under the Act, protection of title or rights of the farmers over the land under such cotnracts, dispute settlement mechanism and a model draft agreement suggesting various terms and conditions. To help States in the formulation of Rules in this regard, the Ministry of Agriculture has also circulated a set of Model APMC Rules to them for adoption. By now, relevant provisions have been made by several State Governments/ UTs in their respective APMC Acts for providing a legal framework to contract farming. In seven States/Union Territories there are no APMC Acts, therefore, there is no regulation of contract farming in such States/UTs. The Model Act circulated by the Ministry is suggestive in nature, and, since Agriculture is a State subject, it is for the State Governments to decide on the implementation, intermediation and monitoring of the contract farming arrangements in their State.

(c) The legal framework for contract farming under the State Agricultural Produce Marketing (Regulation) Acts will be quite helpful to the small farmers in securing better remuneration for their produce, particularly in backward areas/districts, including that of Uttar Pradesh, as, such arrangements would cover the price risk and also the production risk to a great extent. Contract Farming has the potential of combining small farmers' efficiency with economy of scale, utilizing corporate management skills, providing assured markets and reducing transaction costs in the value chain by ensuring vertical integration. Several national and multinational processors of fast food chains are increasingly entering into contract with the farmers to encourage them to cultivate farm products (fruit, vegetables, etc.) of the desired quality by providing them not only seeds and other inputs but also assured procurement of the produce at pre-decided prices. Such tie-ups have special significance for small and marginal farmers, who have small marketed surplus and do not have staying power. They may not individually be capable of investing in technology, but through self help groups or cooperatives, there could emerge a desirable institutional framework, through which farmers can suitably reap the benefits of contract farming arrangements. Contract farming is particularly useful for high value crops because it enables the corporates to associate with the farmers and helps in imparting the latest technological know how to them.

Rain based cultivation

†535. SHRI HARISH RAWAT: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the percentage of area of cultivation based on rain water in the country and State-wise details of cultivation based on rain water;

(b) whether any action plan has been formulated by his Ministry to double the production capacity of cultivation based on rain water;

(c) if so, the details of assistance being provided to the States to execute this action plan by the end of this Five Year Plan?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTI LAL BHURIA): (a) Out of the 141.34 million hectare of estimated net cultivated area, 55.88 million ha (40%) is irrigated and the remaining 85.46 million ha (60%) is rainfed. The State-wise net area sown, net irrigated area and rainfed area is given in the enclosed Statement (*See* below).

(b) and (c) The Government has accorded very high priority to the holistic and sustainable development of dryland/rainfed areas through integrated watershed management approach. Following programmes/schemes are being implemented by Government for sustainable development of rainfed areas.

Ministry of Agriculture

(i) National Watershed Development Project for Rainfed Areas (NWDPRA)

Ministry of Rural Development

(ii) Drought Prone Area Programme (DPAP)

(iii) Desert Development Programme (DDP)

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.